

**ITEM C.207
FOR INFORMATION**

Grace and Gratitude

What is the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s theological and spiritual identity? Many of us struggle to provide an answer to "Why Presbyterian?" that goes beyond structure. Do we have a compelling vision?

What theological vision comes from the core of our PC(USA) identity and invites us to practice Christian community, proclaim the gospel, and work for justice? *Grace and gratitude*. Grace and gratitude succinctly and winsomely describes the *charism*, the gift of the Reformed tradition. Each tradition has a gift that it offers to the church ecumenical. We Reformed learn the discipline of not conforming to the surrounding culture from the Mennonites, an appreciation for God's presence in the sacraments from Roman Catholics, a commitment to engage the structures of society from the National Baptists, and the exuberance of the Spirit from Pentecostals. Our gift to the wider church is our emphasis on God's grace and our gratitude.

This importance of this description is highlighted in Brian Gerrish's book, *Grace and Gratitude*.¹ In the book, Gerrish explores John Calvin's theology of the Lord's Supper. At the table, the relation between God and humanity is exhibited. God calls us to the table, feeds us on Christ himself, and we are sent forth in gratitude for God's gracious movement toward us. The relationship broken by sin is restored at God's initiative—we offer our thanks with our whole lives. More than a characterization of Calvin's theology of the Lord's Supper, grace and gratitude is a simple, yet deep description of Calvin's entire theological vision.

Grace and gratitude is our theological and spiritual vision. What is our picture of God? The gracious one who comes to us in creation, in the law, in the prophets, and ultimately in the person of Jesus Christ. The God who sustains us with the ongoing grace of the Holy Spirit. The God who calls us through the church. The God who is for us.²

Might Grace and Gratitude become a denomination-wide way of describing Presbyterian identity?

¹ Brian A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin*. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

² Catherine M. LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and the Christian Life*. (San Francisco: Harper, 1993).